

If Normandy dissolves because it can't afford to pay tuition for transfer students, not only would it call into question what's next for the Chaney's middle school-age daughter, BrenNae, who transferred from Normandy to Maplewood-Richmond Heights, it would also have an impact on their younger daughter, Anandra, who goes to Jefferson Elementary School in Normandy.



“We’re praying, lots and lots of prayer,” said the girls’ mother, SheRon Chaney.

The uncertainty comes as both daughters are succeeding in the classroom. BrenNae, who struggled during her first year at Normandy Middle School, has come into her own after transferring to Maplewood-Richmond Heights. She’s settled in at her new school and has a big group of new best friends.

http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kwmu/files/styles/x_large/public/201505/main_pic.jpg

From left, SheRon Chaney helps her daughters Anandra and BrenNae with homework at their dining room table.

CREDIT TIM LLOYD / ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO

“Before, I didn’t really like to talk,” BrenNae said. “But now, I’m used to it. It’s fun and I want to go back. I love school, it’s just like, I love it.”

BrenNae’s grades are up. She’s in an honors geometry class and is already thinking about college. Meanwhile Anandra is doing well at Jefferson Elementary. While the district as a whole received a woeful score on its most recent report card from the state, all of its elementary schools scored in the provisional or fully accredited range.

Anandra, a bubbly third grader shows off the T-shirt she earned after being elected to student council. On a recent evening while the girls do homework around the dining room table, she talks about how she helped get her classmates excited about taking their state assessments.

“I made a poster with a rock on it that said, ‘Rock the Test!’” she exclaimed. “Other kids don’t get the privilege to that, but I do.”

She also gave her mom a report card that demonstrates she’s making progress in all academic areas.

“I hate that the transfer law causes such an impact on Anandra,” Chaney said. “But anyone who has seen the transition in BrenNae can tell you it’s well worth it. She’s in honors classes. To see Normandy suffer because she’s growing is hard.”

A rollercoaster ride

When St. Louis Public Radio first spoke with the Chaney family at the end of last school year, the cost of getting BrenNae to school was draining their bank account.

The Chaney family aren’t wealthy people. At the start of last school year, Chaney was unemployed; she now works for St. Louis County’s Special School District. Her husband, Andre, is a laborer at a recycling company in north St. Louis County.

The costs of driving BrenNae to school has meant cutbacks at home, such as recently disconnecting the internet. That makes it hard for BrenNae to do research at home for class assignments.

“We remind them this is not something we’re doing just because, oh, they opened the door,” Chaney said last year. “No, this is a sacrifice for us every morning.”

Like most parents in Normandy, before the start of last school year Chaney chose an option other than Francis Howell in St. Charles County, where transportation is included in the transfer program. Chaney said it was hard to ignore comments made during an infamous meeting (<http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/francis-howell-parents-express-outrage-over-incoming-normandy-students>) before the start of last school year in the mostly white Francis Howell.

At the meeting, some speakers in that district asked if security would be stepped up when Normandy students arrived. Many took those comments to imply black children were inherently dangerous.

Chaney's aunt had participated in the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (<http://www.choicecorp.org/>), which allows African-American students in the St. Louis Public School District to transfer to schools in St. Louis County. The aunt told her how she and other students didn't always feel like they were wanted at school.

“She kept saying, ‘I just don't want her (BrenNae) to experience that, because it was hard for us,’” Chaney recalled.

Chaney said she immediately felt welcome in the more diverse Maplewood-Richmond Heights district, where roughly 38 percent of the student body is African American. The majority of other students are white.

By the end of last school year, BrenNae was still getting used to her new school but doing well in class. At that point, it felt like everything could be turned upside down.

“Last year we were hopeful, this year we’re fearful,” Chaney said in June of last year.

Here are highlights from what happened next.



<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kwmu/file>

From left, Andre', Anandra, BrenNae and SheRon Chaney stand on the porch of their family home in Pasadena Park in north St. Louis County.

CREDIT / TIM LLOYD, ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO

- The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education took over Normandy, reconstituted it as the Normandy Schools Collaborative and gave it no accreditation status. DESE later said the state board meant to accredit as a “state oversight district.” That wouldn’t hold up in court, more on that below. Bottom line, state officials said that schools no longer had to accept transfer students like BrenNae. And if a district did take transfers, it would have to do so at a tuition rate of about \$7,200.
- Ultimately, Maplewood-Richmond Heights became one of seven districts that decided to take transfers at a lower tuition rate.
- In July, several parents of students who could no longer transfer under the new rules filed suit in St. Louis County Circuit Court (http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kwmu/files/07.14.2014_Final_Version_School_Transfer_ challenging the state’s move to limit the number of students who may transfer out of Normandy to accredited school districts.
- Meanwhile teachers in Normandy, where Chaney’s younger daughter, Anandra, goes to school, all had to reapply for their jobs.
- In February, a St. Louis County circuit judge ruled the state board acted improperly when it made the Normandy Schools Collaborative accredited as a state oversight district. “The NSC is not merely “unaccredited”; it is abysmally unaccredited,” Judge Michael Burton wrote in his decision. This removes any legal hurdles for all transfer students.
- The ruling also brings another round of concerns that Normandy will go broke because it can’t keep paying tuition costs for transfer students. And the bill the legislature passed this week that’s intended to fix the transfer process doesn’t include a cap how much receiving districts can charge in tuition.

This week St. Louis Public Radio asked Vice President of the Missouri state board, Mike Jones, at what point the state should say it has done all it can to help Normandy improve and survive.

“I think that’s rapidly reaching that point, if we haven’t reached that point already. I’m not the only person that gets to decide this, but if you ask me, if we’re not there, we’re almost there,” Jones said.

And should the state dismantle Normandy because it can’t afford to pay tuition for transfer students, not only would it throw into question whether BrenNae can continue to transfer to Maplewood-Richmond Heights, it also makes it unclear where students like Anandra, who stayed in the district, will go to school next year.

TAGS: [SCHOOL TRANSFERS \(/TERM/SCHOOL-TRANSFERS\)](#),

[NORMANDY SCHOOL DISTRICT \(/TERM/NORMANDY-SCHOOL-DISTRICT\)](#),

[PUBLIC INSIGHT NETWORK \(/TERM/PUBLIC-INSIGHT-NETWORK\)](#)

Related Content

(/post/nixon-urged-sign-school-bill-provide-more-choice-students)
(/post/nixon-urged-sign-school-bill-provide-more-choice-students)
(/post/nixon-urged-sign-school-bill-provide-more-choice-students)

5 days ago



(/post/nixon-urged-sign-school-bill-provide-more-choice-students)

Nixon urged to sign school bill, provide more choice to students (/post/nixon-urged-sign-school-bill-provide-more-choice-students)

(/post/missouri-legislature-sends-student-transfer-bill-nixon)
(/post/missouri-legislature-sends-student-transfer-bill-nixon)
(/post/missouri-legislature-sends-student-transfer-bill-nixon)

6 days ago



(/post/missouri-legislature-sends-student-transfer-bill-nixon)

Missouri legislature sends student transfer bill to Nixon (/post/missouri-legislature-sends-student-transfer-bill-nixon)

(/post/normandy-s-end-question-whether-or-when)

(/post/normandy-s-end-question-whether-or-when)

(/post/normandy-s-end-question-whether-or-when)

1 week ago



(/post/normandy-s-end-question-whether-or-when)

Is Normandy's end a question of whether or when? (/post/normandy-s-end-question-whether-or-when)

(/post/uncertainty-again-looms-normandy-schools)

(/post/uncertainty-again-looms-normandy-schools)

(/post/uncertainty-again-looms-normandy-schools)

1 week ago



(/post/uncertainty-again-looms-normandy-schools)

Uncertainty again looms for Normandy schools (/post/uncertainty-again-looms-normandy-schools)

(/post/normandy-residents-state-board-youre-setting-our-school-district-fail)

(/post/normandy-residents-state-board-youre-setting-our-school-district-fail)

(/post/normandy-residents-state-board-youre-setting-our-school-district-fail)

2 weeks ago



(/post/normandy-residents-state-board-youre-setting-our-school-district-fail)

Normandy residents to state board: You're setting our school district up to fail (/post/normandy-residents-state-board-youre-setting-our-school-district-fail)

(/post/one-family-year-early-mornings-and-long-drives-draws-close)

(/post/one-family-year-early-mornings-and-long-drives-draws-close)

(/post/one-family-year-early-mornings-and-long-drives-draws-close)

11 months ago



(/post/one-family-year-early-mornings-and-long-drives-draws-close)

For One Family, A Year Of Early Mornings And Long Drives Draws To A Close (/post/one-family-year-early-mornings-and-long-drives-draws-close)

5 Comments

St. Louis Public Radio

 1 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Best ▾



Join the discussion...

Kjoe777 • 3 days ago

Usually, on the rare occasions when I sense some sort of censorship going on regarding what I write, I try to find a way to make a joke of it. Posting comments here is inconvenient.....I am not sure why public radio does things like they do.....I can compare the way Nicaastro treated Stanton Lawrence to being in a white castle at 3 a.m. with saliva dripping as she snarls at him.....but if I post a link to anything, it is automatically pending. Former beacon contributor Peter Downs, posting at Antonio French's pubdef did not make the cut.....I can still access it at the disquis list of my comments and it is among several followups I posted at the PD on a thread which started with

comments....and it is among several followups I posted at the PD, on a thread which started with
1.a reprint of the pd column by the NEA's Charles Smith---then-----my comments about Tim Lloyd asking Jones at what point, etc....3. the information from then president of slps board Peter Downs, shedding some light on the slps takeover,also a comment about teacher authority by snruter rocsak, a couple of responses to him, the original pd report about the state board ordering slps to accept the can academy, (which folded after 7 months), and then.....as well as the dumping of 3800 slps children by closing imagine charters, (right before the state board raised slps to a protected provisional accreditation status)then.....a new twist.....

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Kjoe777 ➔ Kjoe777 • 3 days ago

a place which just passed 20 million hits last week...diane Ravitch's blog.....had a big post today about the elisa crouch sunday story.....and as I was adding the information about the involvement of the Ford foundation in her comments.....I discovered.....a gigantic, and much commented upon essay from last June about what happened at Normandy.....by.....drum roll, please.....Stanton Lawrence. Nobody at Diane's slobbering on him as he talked about re segregation.....warning...facts and figures provided.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Kjoe777 • 3 days ago

for those who missed my historical backup, quoting Peter Downs from Antonio French's pubdef.....it appears in my discuss list of posts, and I also reprinted it in my PD thread, explaining how links automatically make posts "pending".

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Kjoe777 • 4 days ago

Kind of a subtle dig by Tim? State board "member" Jones.....maybe he is no longer Vice president. Excuse me while I go do a search for "State board member Herschend".....there were probably some years back in the nineties when he was not state board president Herschend.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Kjoe777 • 4 days ago

A better question to pose to Jones would be..."at what point the state should say it has done all it can to destroy Normandy. I had been a fan of Mr. Jones for a long while.....but like many st. Louis big shots.....he loves the secret maneuvering, and a history of what he did in 2012 begs to be written. In 2007, the horrendous damage inflicted upon slps by messrs. Sinefield, Slay and Danforth---BECAUSE THE ELECTED BOARD RESULTS THREW A WRENCH INTO THEIR PLANS FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS---such great people on that board which had to be eliminated, disenfranchising the voters of St. Louis who cared about education----their sin? electing the wrong people. It set a precedent, for the arrogant, reckless, borderline hateful behavior of Nicastro.....and Jones in 2012. Nicastro was urged into going along with upping the slps accreditation to provisional .Jones was anticipating what she was simply too stupid to recognize that slns

St. Louis Public Radio is a service of

(<http://www.umsl.edu>)

© 2015 St. Louis Public Radio